



King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division 2002 Briefing Paper

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY TREATMENT

BACKGROUND:

Chemical dependency is a source of serious problems in Washington State and in King County, and the societal costs associated with it are significant. Treatment, though not the exclusive response that is needed to addiction, is the most effective, affordable and humane response. Reliable evidence demonstrates that addiction treatment can be effective both in reducing dependency and use, and in reducing the crime, violence, unemployment and economic dependence, family neglect, and infectious disease that are associated with substance abuse.

Although addiction treatment is available in Washington State and King County to a small minority of those who need it, Washington State has not made a serious commitment to providing treatment to those who need it. As a result, most people who need or could benefit from addiction treatment do not get it, and most of the societal harm that could be averted by effective treatment strategies is not prevented.

ISSUES/CHALLENGES:

- ♦ Lack of treatment funding. Of those that are poor (200% of federal poverty level or below) only two out of ten are able to receive treatment due to lack of funding.
- ♦ Lack of sufficient public funding for those on the Basic Health Plan excludes large numbers of people who need treatment from receiving treatment.
- ♦ Inadequate treatment is available for offenders: 60 % of the those arrested for any crime tested positive for some drug or alcohol use, yet few are able to access treatment.

DATA:

	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Youth</u>
Estimated annual treatment need	60,000	15,000
Number admitted to treatment in 2001	10,566 ¹	1,700

RECOMMENDATION/LEGISLATIVE ACTION:

The legislature should make a commitment to adequately fund addiction treatment. One of the most significant obstacles to the implementation of an effective addiction-treatment plan is the failure to allocate adequate resources to provide treatment to all that need it. We pay the costs of not providing treatment in many other ways including increased criminal justice costs, increase medical costs and most importantly increased human costs.

The Basic Health Plan, administered Washington State Health Care Authority, currently includes less coverage than is required generally for group insurance plans. This should change.

The legislature should fully fund treatment for those arrested not only for drug possession charges, but also for those arrested for any crime who also test positive for drug use.

¹ TARGET System is underreported for the months of October through December 2001 due to changes in the TARGET Database. 10,566 and 1,700 are estimates based on local data.